THE PIANO LESSON

written by

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ADA
(VOICE OVER)

The voice you hear is not my speaking voice, but my mind's voice.

I have not spoken since I was six years old. No one knows why, not even me. My father says it is a dark talent and the day I take it into my head to stop breathing will be my last.

Today he married me to a man I've not yet met. Soon my daughter and I shall join him in his own country. My husband said my muteness does not bother him. He writes and hark this: God loves dumb creatures, so why not he!

Were good he had God's patience for silence affects everyone in the end. The strange thing is I don't think myself silent, that is, because of my piano. I shall miss it on the journey.

A woman in a dark crepe Victorian dress walks in the evening light. Around her neck she wears a writing pad. She crosses a field with large bare trees.

A small girl roller skates down a corridor. A parlour maid looks down the hall where the girl has disappeared.

Three men wearing long grey aprons are fitting the packing for a piano.

On one of the men's arms is a tattoo of a whale in a wild sea.

The girl wearing her skates sits on a small black pony. An old man is pulling it, but it won't move.

The woman lifts back the sheets from the bottom of the sleeping girl's bed. She is still wearing her skates. The woman cuts through the laces and removes the boots. One disembodied skate rolls across the room.

The woman stands at a window lit by moonlight. Her skin appears luminescently white. She turns from the window and moves to an upright piano crowded by packing boxes. In the dim light she begins to play strongly. Her face strains, she is utterly involved, unaware of her own strange gutteral sounds that form an eerie accompaniment to the music.

An old maid in night-dress looks in. Abruptly the woman stops playing. The emotion leaves her face, it whitens and seems solid like a wall.

CUT TO BLACK

1.

Under water a long boat passes overhead, its oars breaking the surface.

2.

Amidst a riotous sea a woman, ADA, is carried to shore on the shoulders of five seamen. Her large Victorian skirt spreads across the men's arms and backs, on her head a black bonnet, around her neck her pad and pen. We should be forgiven if this woman seems a sacrificial offering as the bay they carry her to is completely uninhabited. A black sand backs on to an endless rise of dense native bush.

The breakers are chaotic, the men strain to keep their footing, calling to each other. Behind the woman is her daughter, a girl of ten in Scottish dress. She too is carried on the shoulders of seamen.

ADA is placed on the sand. She looks down at her feet sinking into the wet sand, then up at the huge confusion of fern and bush in front of her. The sound of sea behind is thunderous.

One of the seamen is pissing on the sand. Her daughter is on all fours evidently being sick. But ADA's attention is diverted to the seamen who are staggering through the waves with a huge piano shaped box. They put it down as soon as they get to shore but ADA makes gestures that they must immediately bring it to higher safer ground. The piano placed to her satisfaction she hovers near it, one hand in constant touch of it while her daughter grips her free hand.

3.

TWO SEAMEN finish carrying the last crate to shore. Trunks and boxes including an open crate with hens are scattered along the shore.

The SEAMEN gather together. After a discussion in which they look between ADA and her child and their Coaster out on the sea, one of the men approaches. Behind him the other men keep their eyes out to sea or down on the sand. They don't want to be involved. The sight of the women alone on this beach is too hopeless.

SEAMAN

It's a little rough out there. Could be they can't get through to you in this weather. Maybe they'll come over land.

ADA nods.

SEAMAN

Have you things for shelter?

ADA nods.

SEAMAN

What things have you?

ADA signs to her daughter. The little girl speaks clearly and loudly without emotion.

FLORA

She says "thank you".

Puzzled, the man walks off, then turns and comes back.

SEAMAN

Does your mother prefer to come on with us to Nelson?

ADA looks to FLORA.

FLORA

She says thank you, she prefers to wait here.

FLORA follows the seamen down to the water's edge. She watches as their boat gets smaller and smaller. Then suddenly aware of herself alone and distant, both from the boat and her mother, she runs

frantically up the beach to her mother. The two women are but tiny dots on the shore and the view continues back and back over a vast, endless expanse of dense native bush.

5.

ADA is sheltering behind the crated piano, anxiety etched on her face. FLORA is asleep at her feet a half eaten biscuit in her hand. ADA has found a gap through the crate so that she might lift the lid and play a few notes. The sweetness and comfort of the piano seem only to exaggerate their isolation and hopelessness.

Suddenly a rush of sea water shoots straight under the raised crate of the piano wetting her shoes. ADA stands, pushing FLORA onto her feet. She is aghast to see the tide has crept in completely unnoticed.

They watch three of their boxes float out to sea. One of the hens has escaped the crate and is bobbing up and down in the waves.

6.

It is evening. A grey green light. ADA and FLORA run out along the huge expanse of sand. The tide is low now and the sand looks smooth and slippery like a seal's back. The two women stop and look up and down the beach. Still no one is coming.

Resigned they walk back up the beach to their make-shift tent, a hooped petticoat secured at the edges with stones. Inside the tent a candle lights their conversation. ADA is hand signalling a story to FLORA who lies back watching, nervous and afraid. ADA's whole self is involved in the "telling", her face is alight with expression, now tender, now sad, now humorous, now soft, while her hands and fingers are deft and precise. From outside it is an odd shadow play.

FLORA

(hand signalling) Mother...

ADA pauses.

(speaking) I'm not going to call him Papa,

I'm not going to call HIM anything. I'm not even going to look at HIM.

7.

Through a dense bush walk a small party of MAORI and EUROPEAN MEN. The wetness, closeness and darkness of the bush is such that the air seems green, like at the bottom of a deep sea. Two of the MAORIS share one pair of shoes and all of them are clothed in a mixture of native and European costume. Of the Europeans one is small and has a shy manner perhaps because of a heavy face tic and a strawberry birthmark on his neck. The other is older about 40 and wears a suit, muddy and out of place here in the bush. He staggers, spurts forward then slows to a stop. His hair and face are wet and his skin reflects the green foliage. BAINES the younger man turns and slows.

BAINES

Are we stopping?... Do you want to stop?

The MAORI voices and laughter are becoming fainter. BAINES watches torn between his concern for STEWART and the split in their party.

BAINES

Shall we stop?

Unable to get an answer BAINES runs after the MAORIS.

BAINES

(In Maori) Wait! We are stopping...we're stopping.

STEWART takes out a comb and drags it dazed and zomby like through his wet hair. Inside the darkness of his pocket, he turns over and over a small, worn edged photograph, a smudge of green light allows us to see ADA's tumbling face. Taking it in the heel of his hand he secretly looks at it. Just as the party return and settle he strides on ahead possessed and determined.

STEWART

We must get on.

The MAORIS look at BAINES bewildered.

8.

It is early morning. The sea is calmer and the tide is again low. The party of two EUROPEANS and seven MAORIS come out on to the beach. They see the boxes and walk towards them. STEWART automatically re-combs his hair, patting it against his forehead, where it sticks in a raked pattern. The party stops short of the petticoats where a tell-tale foot reveals its occupants.

STEWART

Miss McGrath, Alisdair Stewart. You'll have to wake yourself. I've got men here to carry your things.

ADA and FLORA struggle up to find themselves confronted by a group of men. The natives stare curiously and comment on the women in Maori. FLORA is struck by shyness and hides under her mother's skirt. ADA cannot look straight at STEWART and STEWART also cannot look at her.

STEWART

You have a good many boxes, I'd like to know what is in each.

As ADA does not move STEWART is puzzled.

STEWART

CAN - YOU - HEAR - ME?

ADA nods and looks up coldly, insulted by his slow loud speaking.

STEWART

Well that is good, yes that is good, good.

STEWART smiling searches ADA's face for some sign of comprehension but is unnerved by her lack of response. He stops smiling, and, patting his hair, walks to the closest box.

STEWART

What's in here?

ADA points to the writing already on the box saying "Crockery and Pots".

STEWART

Ohh, yes so it is.

STEWART stands in front of the next box. He walks about but can see no sign.

STEWART

And this one?

ADA writes "bedclothes and linen" on the pad around her neck. While she writes he takes the opportunity to scrutinise her.

STEWART

You're tall. I never thought you'd be tall.

He walks to another.

STEWART

What's here?

She writes "clothes".

Finally he comes to the piano box. He lifts a corner experimentally.

STEWART

What's in here, lead?

FLORA

(gravely) It's my mother's piano.

STEWART

A piano?

STEWART speaks to the other European man BAINES.

STEWART

Tell them to carry in pairs. Those three and those two the black and the red.

STEWART holds BAINES back a moment.

STEWART

What do you think?

STEWART nods towards ADA. BAINES thinks a moment then turns towards ADA too.

BAINES

She looks tired.

STEWART

She's too tall, that's one thing.

BAINES translates instructions to the MAORIS. As the men go to fetch their designated boxes ADA gets worried. The piano is being left alone. She writes on her pad, "THE PIANO?" She shows STEWART

STEWART

It can't come now.

FLORA

It must come.

STEWART looks at FLORA.

FLORA
... she wants it to come.

STEWART
Yes and so do I, but there are too few of us here to carry it. TOO - HEAVY

ADA writes "I NEED THE PIANO."

STEWART
Do you mean you don't want your kitchenware or your clothes? Is that what you mean?

ADA signs to FLORA.

FLORA
We can't leave the piano.

STEWART
Let us not discuss this further. I am very pleased ....

STEWART slows down as he watches ADA again sign to FLORA, he has the uncomfortable impression he is being interrupted.

FLORA
Mother wants to know if they could come back directly for it?

STEWART is shocked, his mouth hangs slightly open, paused in mid speech.

FLORA
... after they have taken the other things?

STEWART is growing confused and anxious. The MAORIS are having a noisy stone throwing competition further down the beach.

STEWART

I suggest you prepare for a difficult journey. The bush will tear clothes and the mud is deep in places.

STEWART walks away. ADA stands beside the piano, turned away from the activities. FLORA pats her hand trying to cheer her.

STEWART

(to BAINES about the MAORIS) What are they doing? We don't have time for that.

9.

The carrying party are beginning to make their way up into the bush. ADA still stands beside her piano. FLORA wants to follow the party. BAINES comes back along the beach, trailed by a young MAORI BOY.

BAINES

Mr. Stewart asked if I might show you to the path. (ADA does not move) ... May I carry something?

ADA turns to BAINES, her face angry and defiant, her eyes full of tears. BAINES falls back, struck by her show of emotion. ADA and FLORA walk past him toward the bush.

10.

The party threads its way through the bush along the cliff. ADA pauses at the cliff top to see her piano below on the sand, tiny and desolate. Its distance and her love of it suddenly strike her. Its music is faint and becomes loud over the next scene.

11.

Brown feet squelch through the mud, finally followed by dainty boots caked in dirt. The MAORI leaders of the party have stopped. They discuss between themselves.

BAINES

(in Maori) What is it?

MAORI

(in Maori) This way is Tapu. One of our people died and was carried on this path.

STEWART has moved up to the front with BAINES.

STEWART

What's he say?

BAINES

He says we can't go this way.

The MAORI leaders continue discussing, BAINES listens.

STEWART

They want more money. They are trying to make two days out of it.

BAINES

No, no they know another path - it's not far back.

ADA and FLORA sit watching, out of breath. The bush is dense, claustrophobic and exotic. The other MAORIS crowd about the two women, examining their clothing, touching their hair like they are ornaments.

12.

It is another day and STEWART's hut, bleakly set amidst smoking stumps is full of squeals, chasing and antics. The reverend in frock coat has a wedding dress stuck part way up his arms. It is not a normal wedding dress but a backless one used again and again as a photographic prop. Stewart's AUNT MORAG and her companion NESSIE are trying to pull it off.

AUNT MORAG

Watch your feet!

NESSIE

Watch your feet!

ADA and FLORA find the family fun frightening and have taken refuge in the bedroom.

AUNT MORAG

Careful! Watch his hand.

NESSIE

Watch his hand ...

The REVEREND tickles his sister as she tries to get the sleeve off his hand. NESSIE squeals with excitement.

AUNT MORAG

Stop iiit!

NESSIE looks towards ADA panting with excitement at the fun.

AUNT MORAG

(shooing the Reverend out) We'll bring out the bride.

The two women now fit the wedding dress on ADA.

AUNT MORAG
LIFT - YOUR - ARM - UP - DEAR.

FLORA sits on the bed sulkily. She leans back and crosses her leg.

FLORA
My REAL father was a famous German composer ....

AUNT MORAG
... Ohh the tag is broken.

FLORA
(continues) .... They met when my mother was an opera singer ... in Luxemburg ...

The two women pause to look at FLORA. ADA signs to FLORA "THAT'S ENOUGH!"

FLORA
Why?

ADA looks away, the two women finish primping the dress. FLORA crosses her arms.

FLORA
I want to be in the photograph.

13.

NESSIE half holds an umbrella over ADA as they make their way to where the camera is set up in front of a chair and a sparse display of three toi-toi. All about the house is muddy, so much so that they must weave their way through on planks and logs. A fine veil of rain is falling across the distant bush, the whole valley is shrouded in mist. STEWART looks through the camera at the REVEREND and the photographer who are posing as the couple, complete with tatty bouquet. STEWART notices ADA's arrival and seeing her as a real

bride, his bride, he is struck dumb with pride, even the rough tapes at the back of the dress cannot destroy the illusion.

The umbrellas are held away, the rain pours down.

14.

AUNT MORAG has brought a chair into the bedroom and sits knee to knee with FLORA.

AUNT MORAG

I thought she met your father in Luxemburg.

FLORA

Well, yes, in Austria where he conducted the Royal Orchestra ...

AUNT MORAG

(frowning) And where did they get married?

AUNT MORAG checks to see if someone is coming.

FLORA

(her Scottish accent becomes thick and expressive) In an enormous forest, with real fairies as bridesmaids each holding a little elf's hand.

AUNT MORAG sits back, regarding FLORA with obvious disapproval and disappointment. She smooths back her hair.

FLORA

No, I tell a lie, it was in a small country church, near the mountains ...

AUNT MORAG is becoming involved again. She leans forward.

AUNT MORAG

Which mountains are those dear?

FLORA

The Alps.

AUNT MORAG

Ohhh I've never been there. (she leans forward)

FLORA

Mother used to sing the songs in German and her voice would echo across the valleys ....That was before the accident....

AUNT MORAG

Oh what happened?

MORAG looks over her shoulder as FLORA continues to talk.

FLORA

One day when my mother and father were singing together in the forest, a great storm blew up out of nowhere. But so passionate was their singing that they did not notice, nor did they stop as the rain began to fall and when their voices rose for the final bars of the duet a great bolt of lightening came out of the sky and struck my father so that he lit up like a torch... And at the same moment my father was struck dead my mother was struck dumb! She- never-spoke-another-word.

AUNT MORAG

Ohhh ... dear!

The story is interrupted by the return of the wedding party who are dripping wet, exactly as the couple in the story. AUNT MORAG

busties over to take off the wet wedding gown, her face puckered with tragedy, but before she can undo the ties ADA pulls it from herself, so aggressively that the ties and part of the gown comes apart. None of this is a concern to ADA who is distracted with fear for her piano. She crosses to the little window and stares anxiously at the falling rain.

15.

Soft piano music has been playing over the previous scene. Now it builds to strength as sea water swirls high around the piano, small and embattled on the dark rainy beach.

16.

It's morning of the next day. ADA and FLORA sit amongst tea chests in the bedroom. ADA is signing intently to FLORA. FLORA signs back, sometimes using words. STEWART watches uneasy with their secret communication. As STEWART enters the animation is suspended. ADA stands and takes a step back as if to attention.

STEWART

I shall be gone for some days. There is some Maori land I want and may buy very reasonably. (STEWART shuffles) I am hoping you will use the time to settle in, and, in some ways we may start again ....

FLORA and ADA look at each other.

STEWART

All right?

ADA looks at him blankly, then nods.

17.

ADA and FLORA dressed in cloaks and bonnets skirt the dense bush trying to find a path in. It is not easy, because the bush is so tight.

ADA's leg slides in up to her calf in mud.

18.

ADA and FLORA arrive at BAINES' rough hut. It is mid-morning but BAINES is not yet dressed. ADA hands him a note. BAINES looks at it blankly.

BAINES

I'm not able to read.

ADA signs to FLORA.

FLORA

Please take us to the beach where we landed.

BAINES

(blinking) Sorry, I can't do that. (FLORA and ADA stare evenly at him) I don't have the time.

19.

It is much later when BAINES emerges from his hut with a saddle over his arm. The two women are still there. ADA looks up at him expectantly. FLORA mirrors her expression.

BAINES

I - can't - take - you - there.

He puts the saddle over a rail. He continues to saddle up, sneaking glances at them from under the horse and around its side. They watch him closely, not pleadingly, but stubbornly, eerily of one mind.

20.

The sky is blue with long wisps of cloud.

The party of three break on to the long expanse of beach where the piano still stands. It has not been without visitors. There are footprints on the sand and some of the boards have been pulled back. ADA passes BAINES, walking urgently towards it. Soon, ADA has removed enough boards that she may lift the lid and play the keys. BAINES stays back. ADA takes great delight in feeling her fingers on the keys again. Her whole composition is altered. She is animated, joyful, excited.

Down on the wet sand FLORA does a wild dance of her own invention using a seaweed wig. She finishes by rolling down the beach in the sand.

BAINES views them with suspicion, yet he is magnetically drawn to the spectacle. He has never seen women behave with so much abandon. His attention fixes on ADA's uninhibited emotional playing, and as he watches, he finds himself edging irresistibly closer.

The shadows are long on the sand when BAINES collects the boards. ADA and FLORA are attempting a duet. ADA notices him come towards them with the boards, obviously intending that they should leave. Her mood darkens, she continues playing stubbornly even though FLORA has stopped. Abruptly she finishes. In black spirits she replaces her cape and bonnet. BAINES is struck by this sudden change, he watches her mesmerised as he replaces the boards.

21.

Again ADA stops to look at her piano from the cliff top. The sky is darkening and the air is full of bird calls. She turns from the cliff top her face grimly set. She walks past BAINES, oblivious to his curiosity.

22.

STEWART walks along the lip of the hill in evening silhouette. Down below, the hut puffs smoke out into the valley. The lie of the land traps sound like a shell, and the clear high notes of a voice echo out. Suspicious that ADA is singing, STEWART approaches the house quietly.

Through the open kitchen door he sees that the keys of a piano have been etched on the table top. While ADA "plays" the notes FLORA sings them.

STEWART puts his pack down. ADA stands to attention, folding the tablecloth back over the table.

STEWART

Hello.

ADA nods. STEWART's hand explores the markings on the table. ADA watches his hand moving under the checked cloth.

23.

AUNT MORAG, NESSIE and TWO MAORI GIRLS dressed in proper Victorian costume are kneeling around a huge double white sheet, sewing and cutting it. The MAORI girls are part of the mission's good works, but while they enjoy their costumes they don't enjoy the work and constantly want to nap.

STEWART is standing, looking on. BAINES is behind him in the kitchen removing his boots.

AUNT MORAG

(looking carefully at STEWART) Well you stopped combing your hair, which is a good thing, it was looking over done. (without pause but referring to the sheet) You see these are the slits that the heads will go through, show him Nessie ... they'll be dead, the Reverend is going to use animal blood, no doubt it will be very dramatic. Tea! (for NESSIE rather than to her)

NESSIE

It will be very dramatic.

NESSIE leaves to get the tea. The MAORI girls make big sighs as they continue with their stitching. One has nodded off to sleep.

STEWART

(sitting down) What would you think if someone played a kitchen table like it were a piano?

AUNT MORAG

Like it were a piano?

STEWART

It's strange isn't it? I mean it's not a piano, it doesn't make any sound.

NESSIE puts STEWART's tea down. BAINES comes in with his tea cup dwarfed in his big hands. He stands back leaning against a wall.

AUNT MORAG

(hissing to NESSIE) Biscuits! No, no sound.

NESSIE hustles back to the kitchen.

STEWART

I knew she was mute, but now I'm thinking it's more than that. I'm wondering if she's not brain affected.

AUNT MORAG

... No sound at all?

STEWART

No, it was a table.

AUNT MORAG

(musing) Well, she was very violent with the gown. She tore off a chunk of lace. If I hadn't been there I'd have sworn she'd used

her teeth ..

NESSIE

... and wiped her feet on it.

STEWART

Well it has not yet come to anything, just a concern.

AUNT MORAG pats her chest, a calming device.

AUNT MORAG

Oh, yes, yes of course, a concern.

STEWART

There is something to be said for silence ...

AUNT MORAG

Oh indeed. Cotton!

She holds her needle up for NESSIE to thread.

STEWART

(warming) ... And with time she will, I'm sure, become affectionate.

AUNT MORAG

Certainly, there is nothing so easy to like as a pet and they are quite silent.

BAINES watches quietly on.

24.

STEWART is at the woodchop cutting firewood. He displays his virtuosity as an axeman, cutting the wood into ever more slender pieces, FLORA is watching and stacking the fallen timber. She flinches as the axe hits the wood, but scurries in to pick up the timber.

BAINES is standing talking to STEWART.

BAINES

Those 80 acres, that cross the stream, what do you think of them?

STEWART

On your property?

BAINES

Yes.

BAINES carries a log across for STEWART who talks without pausing in his work.

STEWART

Good, flatish land with reliable water, why? I don't have money. What are you about?

BAINES

I'd like to make a swap.

STEWART

What for?

BAINES

The piano.

STEWART

The piano on the beach? Ada's piano?

BAINES nods. STEWART stops, this is serious.

STEWART

It's not marshy is it?

STEWART has walked a few paces away from his wood chop in the direction of the land.

BAINES

No.

STEWART

You'd have to organise it up here.

BAINES

Yes, I thought that.

STEWART

Well Baines the music lover, I never would have known.

BAINES

I'll have to get lessons. It wouldn't be much use without them.

STEWART

Yes, I suppose you would.

BAINES remains silent. He looks away.

STEWART

Ada can play.

BAINES shrugs.

STEWART

I have it in a letter she plays well.

FLORA has stopped stacking. She is lying along the top of the wood, lifting a leg up and down, watching the men.

25.

STEWART, flushed with his plans, is pouring tea into cups. ADA and FLORA sit beside each other at the table.

STEWART

I have got us some excellent land. Baines has taken some queer idea to have a piano, and you are to give him lessons. Have you taught before?

ADA signs to FLORA.

FLORA

What on?

STEWART

On your piano, that is the swap.

ADA finger signs, her face furious.

STEWART

What does she say?

FLORA

She says it's her piano, and she won't have him touch it. He's an oaf, he can't read, he's ignorant.

STEWART

He wants to improve himself ... and you will be able to play on it ... (ADA is not responding well) Teach him to look after it.

ADA's breathing becomes heavy with anger, she writes furiously on her pad.

"NO, NO THE PIANO IS MINE! IT IS ME!!"

STEWART regards her note and her passion with suspicion and disdain.

STEWART

(getting up) You can't go on like this, we all make sacrifices and so will you.

ADA's anger explodes, she sweeps the cups, teapot, bread, off the table. STEWART walks out white-faced and stiff. FLORA stoops to pick up the cups, but quickly steps back as ADA impulsively hurls a plate after the retreating STEWART. The plates smashes on the wall. STEWART returns shaking with anger.

STEWART

You will teach him. I shall see to that!

ADA's emotions are suddenly removed and she views STEWART blankly, eerily so.

26.

The piano is taken up through the bush by the MAORI PORTERS. They fool about and argue allowing the back of the piano to fall to the ground. It thunders out on the bottom end of the scale. The Maoris scatter frightened. The piano is alone on the path, the Maoris watching it guardedly. At length one of the carriers cannot contain his curiosity. He peers into the crate to see what it is that made this noise.

(In Maori)
What?
I can't see anyone.
What's there?
A box.
What made the noise?

He lifts a side and then drops it. Again it echoes out. Another Maori comes forward, he too lifts a corner and drops it. The piano rings out, the sound carrying across a great sweep of bush.

27.

The women duck low to avoid a branch as STEWART leads them to BAINES' hut on his horse. The path slopes up through a strange, bearded forest where the tops of trees are bare and ghost like.

ADA is unrepentant, she does not want to teach BAINES the piano.

STEWART

Just be encouraging, no one expects him to be good.

28.

The piano is the only cared for item in the rough hut.

STEWART

(lifting the lid) It looks good, very nice looking thing. Well ... I wish you luck. The girls are very excited about the lessons.

The "girls" look anything but excited. FLORA shy, plays obsessively with a long strand of greasy hair. ADA is cold and grim.

STEWART

Flora will explain anything Ada says. They talk through their fingers, you can't believe what they say with just their hands.

STEWART leaves. BAINES goes to the piano and lifts the lid. He looks at them. ADA signs to FLORA.

FLORA

My mother wants to see your hands. Hold them out.

BAINES holds out his hands, spread wide as if holding a ball.

Like this ...

FLORA puts her neat little fingers together, first with their backs up then she turns them over. BAINES does the same only his hands are big and coarse. ADA signs to FLORA. BAINES is shyly keen.

FLORA
You have to wash them.

BAINES
They are washed.

ADA signs.

FLORA
Wash them again.

BAINES
The marks do not come off. They are scars and hardened skin.

ADA and FLORA do not move. Humiliated BAINES takes a scrub brush, soap and bucket and goes outside. ADA can see him from the window. She moves to her piano. She wants to touch it but she is torn by her feelings, wanting it, but not owning it. She strokes the varnished wood with her hand and softly lifts the lid. Outside FLORA stands beside BAINES pointing out bits of his hand he should still scrub. Furtively she lays her hands on the keys. The instrument is horribly out of tune, almost every note is off. She goes outside and signs to FLORA.

FLORA
There's no tune left in the piano so she can't teach you.

The two women leave.

29

Two men come crashing out down a steep bush hill. They are tied to each other. BAINES, the younger and stronger, is trying to break their fall by grasping hold of branches and shoots. Finally their fall is checked. The old man is white haired, the front of his suit splattered with the debris of many meals. He sits up feeling about for his glasses. He is blind. His eyes, though closed, wobble and roll. BAINES finds the glasses. One of the lenses has gone, the other is very dark. The old man fits his handkerchief in the gap.

30.

BAINES carries the old man on his back, they cross a huge scree. Each of BAINES' steps dislodge a fall of rocks. The crashing of stones echoes across the valley. BAINES and he are but small dots in this giant earth scar.

31.

BAINES has a long stick in each hand. The white haired man holds on to each from behind. His feet search for safe footing. The place they walk is full of cabbage trees and marshy ground.

32.

Inside BAINES' hut, the old man feels the piano.

BLIND MAN

Ah, a ..... A fine instrument, I've not come across one here.

Out of his pocket he takes a carefully wrapped tuning fork. He unwraps the package, lifts the back and lid and starts to tune. He sniffs the air. BAINES watches. He sniffs close to the keys.

Scent?

He works on.

What will you play when it's tuned?

BAINES looks over at him from the meal he is preparing.

BAINES

I can't play.

The blind man stops working.

BLIND MAN

You don't play?

BAINES

No, I can't. I'm going to learn.

The man goes back to work somewhat depressed by the futility of the venture.

BLIND MAN

Tuned, but silent.

33.

The two men eat a plain meal of mutton and potatoes. The blind man eats off a box top. BAINES has his meal on his lap. His dog watches each fork load to his mouth.

BLIND MAN

My wife sang with a bell clear tone. After we married she stopped. She said she didn't feel like singing, that life made her sad. And that's how she lived, lips clamped closed over a perfect voice. Now in my opinion that is taking feeling too far; far too far.

34.

A slash of sunlight falls across the piano. Thousands of particles of dust become visible floating in the air. BAINES is at the window in his shirt/night shirt. He notices the dust on the piano and strips off his shirt which he uses as a duster. Under the shirt he is naked. As he wipes the smooth wood he becomes aware of his nakedness. His movements become slower until he is no longer cleaning, but caressing the piano.

35.

On the path to BAINES' house, ADA and FLORA sit in the bush. ADA's head is bowed. Her hands held over her face. FLORA tries to catch the spots of light in her palm as they twinkle through the thick canopy of leaves over head.

36

The door opens. ADA and FLORA stand in their cloaks and bonnets.

FLORA

Mother says she can't stand to teach piano with it all out of tune. So I'm to do scales.

ADA turns and walks off. FLORA bustles in. BAINES watches ADA from the window.

FLORA

Have you scrubbed your hands?

FLORA begins a scale.

It's in tune.

She looks over at BAINES who is still gazing out the window. She gets up to see what BAINES is looking at. She sees her mother and divines BAINES is looking at nothing.

FLORA
You have to watch me where I put my fingers.

FLORA starts again. ADA can only hear the piano faintly but moves closer as she too hears it's in tune. As she enters the hut BAINES pulls his fingers away from the piano. FLORA sees this and stops too. She looks at her mother.

FLORA
It's in tune.

ADA checks the other notes. FLORA moves away, a bit sulky and fluffed up with the interruption of her teaching.

ADA tries the piano. She looks over at BAINES then signs to FLORA.

FLORA
She wants to see what you can do.

BAINES
I'd rather not play. I want to listen and learn that way.

ADA is a bit nonplussed. She does not want to be listened to anymore than she wants to teach. She pulls a strand of her hair then signs to FLORA.

FLORA
What do you want to hear?

BAINES shrugs shyly and looks away out the window. He doesn't know.

ADA is slow to start. Unobliging as ever she plays scales. But once begun her belligerence fades as her absorption in the music strengthens.

37.

Back at STEWART's hut, ADA lies dispirited on the bed. FLORA lies beside her holding ADA's hand and licking each finger, relishing their flavour.

FLORA

Ohh raspberry jelly, umm rice pudding, but with no raisins ...

ADA smiles softly.

Ohh, this is good, taste it, strawberries and cream ...

STEWART enters their bedroom. FLORA stops and ADA stands against the wall. STEWART finds the atmosphere curious yet impenetrable.

STEWART

Shall I kiss you goodnight?

FLORA looks up at her mother. ADA shrugs.

STEWART nods stiffly, and uncomfortably, he leaves.

38.

It's raining heavily, FLORA sits on the small verandah outside BAINES' hut, her legs stuck straight out into the wet. She is operating a merciless power game with the dog, forcing it out of the verandah with a stick.

39

ADA's playing can be heard inside. BAINES sits back watching ADA. Her cape on the hook is dripping a puddle on to the floor and there is a circle of drips around her skirt hem. She is totally absorbed in her piano music as she was on the beach.

BAINES watches. Her long white neck, now wet from rain, proves irresistible. He comes across the room and kisses her. ADA jumps back. They stand on either side of the room.

BAINES

Do you know how to bargain, nod if you do.

She doesn't move.

There's a way you can have your piano back.
Do you want it back?

ADA eyes him suspiciously.

BAINES

There's things I want to do while you play.
If you let me you can earn it back.

A visit for every key.

ADA is tense but she is thinking about it. She holds up a finger then points to the black of her dress. BAINES looks from her dress across to the piano before he makes the association.

For every black?

ADA nods.

There's not so many.

ADA makes no response.

All right.

She sits back at the piano. She plays the lowest black key as in "number one".

She takes her hands off the piano waiting.

It's better that you play.

Obediently she begins, stopping abruptly, indignantly, as he touches her neck. After a moment she settles back to the piano.

40.

Outside FLORA is cradling the poor confused dog, asking him what cruel miserable person had sent him out into the cold and wet.

41.

BAINES bathes in a riverhole. He is watched by a gathering of Maoris, sometimes with great seriousness, at other times with hilarity. They pass between them his trouser belt, each fascinated by the fastening mechanism. Repeatedly they do it up and undo it. One of the older women HIRA crouches close to the bank keeping up a steady line of inquiry. Her manner is relaxed but focused and persistent.

HIRA

(English)

- You want a wife?
- I find you a good girl, someone who wash for you and cook for you.
- You want that, Eh?
- You married already?

Someone else calls out in Maori:

- He married and ate his wife for the feast ... hee hee hee ...

HIRA

- She comb your hair, keep you clean.

BAINES

I don't want a wife.

HIRA

- You married?

BAINES

Yes I am.

HIRA

- She dead?

BAINES

No, she lives her own life in England.

HIRA

- You get her here George or she run off with some other fella.
- What about wife for here?
- George, I myself married a white man, he was an old man, a whaler.

BAINES is out of the water. One of the Maori kids has belted his friend to the tree. BAINES undoes him.

- You want your comb George?

The people on the bank have been using BAINES' comb on their own hair, peering into a tiny piece of mirror.

42.

BAINES' dog hears ADA and FLORA approach. It takes off under the house. FLORA calls the dog. It keeps well hidden. ADA has gone on inside and the door is closed. FLORA stands outside the door left out and lonely. She knocks. BAINES answers.

43.

FLORA

(small voice) I want to speak to my mother.

She buries her head in her mother's skirt.

I don't want to be outside, I want to watch.

ADA signs to FLORA.

I'll be very quiet.

ADA leads her to the door, signing to her.

I won't look at him!

FLORA is shut out.

ADA sit at the piano. She is shy and nervous. She turns to BAINES who nods. ADA begins to play. BAINES keeps his head bowed, but as the playing becomes more confident he raises his head to watch. He sits at a far corner of the room apparently enjoying the whole vision of this woman at her piano.

After some times BAINES takes his chair to a closer position and from an opposite angle. ADA glances up as she feels him passing behind her. He seems satisfied to watch. His attention finally focuses on her neck as it bends further or closer to the piano.

Again he shifts his chair, taking it round the back and to the other side of the piano. As he moves ADA watches warily. From this position he

doesn't try to touch her, but watches, enjoying her fingers moving on the keys and the small details of emotion on her face. Twice he closes his eyes and breathes deeply. BAINES is experiencing an unpractised sense of appreciation and lust. When his eyes are closed, ADA glances at him with curiosity and suspicion.

44.

FLORA stands on a kitchen chair. AUNT MORAG and NESSIE have paused from fitting FLORA's bodice and wire angel wings. They are attempting to learn the hand gestures as FLORA signs:

"I shall listen hard to rehearsal, because I live too far away to go often."

AUNT MORAG

(suspiciously) Which sign is the word rehearsal?

FLORA deftly demonstrates.

AUNT MORAG

I can't imagine a fate worse than being dumb. Turn around.

NESSIE

To be deaf?

AUNT MORAG

Oh yes, deaf too - TERRIBLE!

FLORA

Actually, to tell you the whole truth, Mama says most people speak rubbish and it's not worth listening to.

AUNT MORAG and NESSIE exchange looks.

AUNT MORAG

(stiffly) Well, that is a strong opinion.

FLORA

Yes, it's unholy.

45.

ADA is quick to remove a used plate and cup left on top of the piano. She wipes the surface underneath. BAINES is sitting next to the window, his elbow on the sill, his head turned away.

BAINES

Lift your skirt.

ADA stops playing. She turns to him. Thinks about it, then slowly lifts her skirt a little to show her boots.

Lift it higher.

ADA pulls the skirt up fractionally so the top of her boots are exposed. BAINES nods. ADA starts to play again, not so confidently as before. BAINES moves close, he goes down on his knees to watch her feet on the pedals.

BAINES

Higher.

ADA doesn't hear.

Lift it higher.

She stops and lifts her skirt to her knees. She looks at BAINES with ill disguised contempt. BAINES is enthralled with her legs, or what he can now see of them. He moves back to watch them from behind.

He's lying on the ground, head propped on his arm. ADA's slim stockinged calves work the pedals, one of the stockings has a small hole through which her white skins shows.

46.

It is evening at the Mission House and the REVEREND is closely watched by STEWART, AUNT MORAG and NESSIE as he cuts out the shape of an axe from a piece of marbled cardboard. A lamplight flickers warm tones across their faces while the rest of the room is dark giving it a conspiratorial air.

REVEREND

Nessie, your hand out ... out here.

NESSIE hesitatingly puts her arm out towards him and the REVEREND chops away in the air two feet in front of her. NESSIE looks at AUNT MORAG puzzled.

REVEREND

Look you are being attacked!

The REVEREND points to the opposite rose-papered wall, where his shadow and paper axe now look very real as they loom large above the crouching NESSIE chopping into her. NESSIE squeals.

REVEREND

And with the blood ... it will be a good effect.

47.

ADA's finger plays the fourth black key from the left hand side, denoting lesson four.

BAINES

Undo your dress. This part, (he indicates the top) I want to see your arms.

ADA is taken unawares. She sits a moment unsure if she wants to co-operate, then slowly she starts to undo her buttons

ADA pulls her arms out of the tight sleeves. Underneath she wears a worn-in bodice. Her arms are so white they seem transparent. A delicate network of blue-green veins crisscross up the soft underpart of her arms. A dark growth of hair in her armpit suggests a shadowy depth. The back of her hands, normally white, are quite tanned in comparison.

BAINES

Play.

BAINES draws his chair close. Gently he places his hand on the soft underpart of her forearm. ADA stiffens and pulls away. He grips the arm.

Two keys.

ADA continues to play. Slowly he moves his hand higher towards her shoulder. Clearly unnerved she changes the music to something brisk, almost comical. BAINES feels suddenly ridiculous, his mood broken. He takes his hand away and moves back to the window injured. ADA does not show it outwardly but she is relieved to have won herself a respite.

48.

STEWART is at the woodchop talking to AUNT MORAG and NESSIE. Two of AUNT MORAG's MAORI GIRLS lie napping by a tree.

AUNT MORAG

I hardly need to give one to you, but there you are anyway.

NESSIE has been sorting through a basket of invitations, finding STEWART's she hands it to AUNT MORAG who hands it to STEWART.

Don't be late. You will see there are two times and since you are accompanying a performer, you will need to make the earlier time ...

STEWART has stopped listening, he is watching ADA and FLORA pick their way through the fallen logs to BAINES path.

STEWART

Wait.

The two women stop. There is a Japanese sense of deferment to STEWART.

STEWART

How are the lessons going?

ADA nods enthusiastically.

He's getting on all right?

ADA nods again.

Good.

AUNT MORAG

That is good, yes.

As ADA walks on AUNT MORAG leans towards STEWART.

She seems quietened down. Is she more affectionate?

STEWART looks after them unable to answer.

AUNT MORAG

Ah well, slowly, slowly ....

BAINES secures a chair against the door while ADA is removing her dress top. She sits at the piano hugging herself again the chill. As BAINES passes he knocks the jacket off the chair back. He picks it up and takes it across to her seat by the window.

BAINES nods and ADA begins to play. BAINES fingers the still warm jacket, he lifts it up and smells it. ADA turns around and stops playing, suddenly appalled by his odd sensual pleasure taking. She holds out her hand for the jacket, her expression stern and censorious. She indicates he should return it to the chair back. BAINES ignores her. ADA stands and comes over to BAINES. She pulls the jacket from his hands and replaces it across the chair back, but as she turns to sit, BAINES is beside her. He pulls the shoulders of her bodice down, exposing her shoulders and some of her breast. ADA immediately stands, but BAINES is much stronger and man-handles her across to the bed. ADA struggles seriously, this is much, much more than she was expecting.

BAINES

Four keys.

ADA holds up five fingers and mouths 'five'.

I just want to lie.

ADA shakes her head vigorously and again mouths 'five'.

All right, all right five.

ADA no longer struggles. She is stiff and still. BAINES intoxicated by the smell and presence of her skin becomes soft and gentle. He kisses and touches her with feeling and affection. Then suddenly aware of her stillness, he too becomes still. He pulls himself up to see whether her face betrays her feelings. ADA seizes this opportunity to return to the uncertain sanctuary of her piano. From the bed, BAINES watches her run a hand noiselessly over the polished ivory keys, a gesture betraying affection never afforded to him. BAINES gets up. He shuts the piano

:id forcing ADA to remove her hand. ADA immediately stands and dresses, marking hurtfully BAINES' ownership of her piano.

50.

A golden evening. STEWART in his best shirt and trousers prepares the horse and cart. Inside FLORA is in her finished Angel costume, she sings softly to herself while ADA undoes the long strands of plaits and separates them to comb.

FLORA

The holy and the Ivy ...

STEWART comes in to put on his jacket, but the collar is all tucked in. ADA automatically adjusts it for him, settling it around his neck. Her touch, meant practically, strangely affects him. Involuntarily his eyes close and his breath leaves him in a rush.

51.

People are arriving at the school hall. One family is being ferried through the mud in a wheelbarrow. Some people are already seated in the hall. Several other angels have arrived, and they like FLORA are ushered backstage.

52.

BACKSTAGE, the Sunday School teacher is gathering the children together, reminding them of the order of songs, checking their hair, etc. The local dramatic society are also preparing themselves. One of the women is peeping through a hole in a make-shift curtain to watch the townspeople seating themselves.

WOMAN

They're bringing in extra seats!

Despite this, there would still be only a maximum of forty people, 10 or so of them MAORIS in their best European dress.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Oh God, don't pin my hair too high Alfred!

STILL ANOTHER

Yes, me too, do it about here ... (she shows Alfred)

Two of the women are putting a little colouring on each of the angels while 2 other angels are being smacked for putting their white gloved hands in the bucket of blood.

53.

Everyone is chatting at each other's seats, except the MAORI guests who wait solemnly. AUNT MORAG is organising the placement of the new seats. BAINES arrives.

MAN ONE

Look who's here, the musical MR. BAINES ...
What will we have tonight George ....
"Twinkle, twinkle"?

BAINES smiles and blinks, the teasing continues as BAINES scans the room for ADA.

ANOTHER MAN

"Mary had a little lamb" or a polka, come on George what's it to be?

AUNT MORAG bustles over to BAINES and pushes him in front of her towards NESSIE and the piano.

AUNT MORAG

Do come and turn pages ...

BAINES looks wildly about for rescue.

BAINES

... I can't read music, I have just begun.

BAINES backs off from NESSIE whose face drops in disappointment. He has spotted ADA and is eager to take a seat near her. He takes the seat next to ADA but one. He sits smiling and blinking. The teasing continues, behind him.

STEWART

(turning) Lot of fools. Come on, move up.

ADA puts her hand on the seat and shakes her head indicating that she is saving it for FLORA. BAINES is rebuffed and looks across at ADA who ignores him.

The main lights are put out and everyone returns to their places. In the dark STEWART shyly takes ADA's hand in his. BAINES watches STEWART squeezing her hand and quite out of control stands and leaves accompanied by a chorus of "Shhhhhhhhhhhhh". Satisfied, ADA watches him go.

The children file on with their candles. They stand in a group singing with great seriousness, but struck with shyness their voices are so small as barely to be heard.

- sing up Billy!
- Come on sing out!

One of the smallest promptly pees.

54.

Backstage all is ready for the main dramatic event. The master of ceremonies, the REVEREND is on stage explaining the dramatics. The candles are blown out and back light is put on.

REVEREND

(in character) Poor Sally-Anne, and what was

her crime her sweet smile ...?

Meanwhile the REVEREND is chopping away at SALLY-ANNE's silhouette with his paper axe while SALLY-ANNE screams. NESSIE accompanies the theatrics with suspenseful piano playing. Finally the head is pinned through the hole in the sheet by it's hair. AUNT MORAG is on all fours spilling blood onto the sheet.

One of the MAORI CHIEFS mutters disturbed, two of the other MAORI men stand up. Other members of the audience shriek with pleasure and horror. The REVEREND is axing the next victim, but as the amputated arm is pinned by the sleeve and blood drips off it, the MAORIS begin to shout. In Maori they threaten the "cowardly" murderer behind the sheet, one takes out his club and raises it. As another of the Maoris runs to the front, the audience parts and the corpses come very much to life.

55.

Backstage the CHIEF and his party are shown the theatrical devices; the blood-bucket, (which is duly sampled), the paper axe, the splits in the sheets.

56.

STEWART sits at the kitchen table. He has neatly wet and combed his hair. He has a journal of pressed botanical specimens in front of him which he is apparently sorting through, but as he shuffles the same two pages back and forth, it is clear that his mind is elsewhere. His eyes slide to ADA's and FLORA's room where ADA is telling FLORA a good night story.

FLORA has her arms locked around her mother's neck, stopping her finish.

FLORA

Tell me about my real father, tell me that story.

ADA signs.

Ohh but tell me again. Was he your teacher?

ADA nods and strokes FLORA's hair from her face. FLORA lies back.

How did you speak to him?

ADA signs to FLORA who watches in love with all the stories of her real and unreal father.

ADA (subtitles)
I didn't need to speak, I could lay thoughts
out in his mind like they were a sheet.

FLORA
What happened? Why didn't you get married?

ADA continues to sign her hands casting odd animal like shadows on the newspapered walls.

ADA cont.
After a while he became frightened and he
stopped listening.

FLORA
(signing) Then I was born?

ADA nods.

FLORA
(speaking) and he was sent away. What
happened ...

ADA has her hand on FLORA's mouth, FLORA takes it, kisses it and curls up around it like a pillow.

ADA mouths "Go to sleep". ADA turns just catching sight of STEWART leaning back into the shadows.

57.

ADA goes to the piano, she is upset that BAINES has left a cup and plate on top of it. BAINES intercepts her, stepping several times between her and the piano. She sees the game and stands still. He steps aside. She removes the cup and plate, gently, lovingly wiping the surface underneath. There is a sulky irritation in the ways BAINES watches her.

ADA starts to play, BAINES watches then looks away.

BAINES

I don't want you to play. I just want you to sit.

ADA keeps playing until she has finished. Without looking at him she holds up two fingers against the piano.

BAINES

(angry) No, not two keys.

ADA starts playing again, BAINES feels powerless. He no longer admires her absorption with the piano, he is jealous of it.

BAINES

(shouts) Two keys then!

She stops playing. There is an insolence or casualness in the way she regards BAINES. He pulls her chair back from the piano. This upsets her, as much of her confidence was associated with the instrument. BAINES kisses her passionately on the mouth. ADA pulls back, BAINES persists, he is desperate and romantic.

STEWART, with BAINES interpreting, talks with a group of MAORIS at the base of a bush covered hill. The MAORIS sit behind a small representation of the hill marked out with twigs on the ground. The atmosphere is tense.

BAINES

(standing, pointing to the plan) All right, just this area twelve blankets.

He shows them "twelve" with his fingers. The MAORIS look carefully at the quality of the blankets, noting the depth of the weave and the strength of the wool. They shake their head as they discuss them.

STEWART

(quietly to BAINES) What about the guns?

BAINES nods.

BAINES

AND he will give you ten guns.

MAORI NEGOTIATOR

(in Maori) No. No more talk. We won't sell the land. We will trade you pigs, that is all.

He messes up the pattern of twigs as he speaks. Another MAORI at his side disagrees, he thinks they should get the guns and sell the land. But the negotiator gets up to leave as do the other MAORIS all still discussing.

STEWART snatches back his blankets and sulkily shakes them out to fold.

BAINES

(in Maori) Send my greetings to your chief.

The MAORI NEGOTIATOR accepts this solemnly.

59.

BAINES and STEWART walk through the bush. STEWART laden down with his blankets, red-faced and irritable.

STEWART

What do they want it for? They don't cultivate it, burn it back, anything. How do they even know it's theirs ...?

BAINES stops as he comes to a freshly placed fence post. STEWART winds down his complaints watching BAINES anxiously. BAINES walks down to the next one, he touches the freshly split post.

(tentatively) I thought I might as well mark it out.

BAINES

Yes, why not.

STEWART

Ada says you're doing well with the piano?

BAINES

Oh yes, not bad. (walking on to the next post) You've been working hard.

STEWART

Not like mastering the ivories, is it?

BAINES keeps walking from post to post.

STEWART

I'll have to come and hear you play. Do you sing as well? I like songs. What do you play?

BAINES

Nothing just yet.

STEWART

No. Well I suppose it takes time. So what you just do scales do you?

60.

ADA has cut a good sized cabbage in the vegetable patch. She throws it to FLORA who misses, dropping it in a pool of mud, splattering her face and dress. ADA smiles and FLORA who was about to cry gives the cabbage a big football boot towards her mother. ADA's mouth falls open, but then she too kicks it and they begin to dribble the mud caked cabbage towards the hut. Into this arrives STEWART.

STEWART

Baines can't play a damn thing. Is that right he can't play a thing?

We're going to lose that land, the way he was carrying on over it.

Is he musical? You've got to teach him a song. Something simple.

FLORA has her foot on the cabbage, she nudges it off behind her. It rolls down the hill. STEWART can't help but notice.

STEWART

What's that?

He follows the cabbage down the hill, where he scrapes some of the mud off.

This thing's been knocked to pieces.

61.

FLORA is seen through BAINES' window. Inside, ADA as ever charts her progress on the black keys, eleven. She turns to BAINES for instructions. BAINES is not himself, he is sulky and distant.

BAINES

Do what you like. Play what you like.

ADA is perplexed by this turn about of behaviour. A little uncertainly, she sets about her playing. After a little she too turns to see what BAINES is doing. He's not there. She is surprised then anxious as she fears the deal may be off when there are now so few keys to go. She starts to play again, but her anxieties prove too great. She stops and listens. She looks out the window, where FLORA is mucking about in the yard. She walks to his bedroom, listens, then opens the door. BAINES stands naked looking at her. ADA is taken aback.

BAINES

I want to lie together without clothes on.
How many would that be?

ADA holds up ten fingers - an impossibly high number of keys.

BAINES nods.

ADA is surprised; she didn't expect him to agree. Hesitantly, she starts to undress. She lies on her petticoat, having deemed the bed too dirty. BAINES lies, very still, on top of her. A scraping sound is heard.

FLORA is outside walking along sticks and logs trying to make sure she never puts her foot on the ground. She looks over at the house suddenly aware that the piano playing has stopped again. She investigates the mystery peeping through the various cracks and holes in the loosely built hut. Her vision is always only parts of bodies, the venture is one of challenge and curiosity.

62.

FLORA and three small Maori children play amongst some native pines. Two MAORI WOMEN smoke and chat nearby. The children rub up and down against the tree trunks kissing and hugging them. The game has an edge of promiscuity to it as they exchange trunks and hug one tree as a group. Unseen by the children STEWART marches towards FLORA. He pulls her off the tree.

STEWART

Never behave like that, never nowhere. You are greatly shamed and you have shamed those trunks. (trees)

The MAORI WOMEN keep up an unacknowledged chant.

MAORI WOMEN

- What o'clock Mr. Stewart?
- tobacco?

63.

With a bucket of dull soapy water FLORA begins the task of washing the tree trunks.

The MAORI WOMEN laugh and point to their feet meaning her to wash them too. Their children are napping in their laps.

64.

FLORA is still washing the tree trunk silhouetted against the evening sky. FLORA is tearful and sorry for herself. The job has an increased futility as it has begun to rain. STEWART is inspecting her penance. She follows STEWART about the trees.

FLORA

(sulkily) I know why Mr. Baines can't play the piano.

STEWART

You've missed this bit.

FLORA

She never gives him a turn.

STEWART stops and looks at her.

She just plays whatever she pleases,
sometimes she doesn't play at all.

STEWART continues through the trees more slowly.

STEWART

And when is the next lesson?

FLORA

Tomorrow.

FLORA puts her bucket on her head to protect herself from the rain.

65.

The next day is very windy, the tops of trees are thrashed by fierce gusts of wind and some smaller branches crash to the ground. ADA's long dress and cape flap uncontrollably. FLORA's smaller cape stands out on end. Birds fly in mad wind-battered courses, swooped up then strangely drawn down.

66.

ADA and FLORA arrive at BAINES' place to see the piano emerge from the hut carried by six MAORI MEN, one of whom does nothing but walk beside it "plonking" the keys. Another group of MAORIS sit cross-legged on the verandah playing draughts. Panicked ADA hurries down the hill to the hut. FLORA follows behind.

67.

Inside the hut, HIRA, the old woman from the bathing spot, is smoking her pipe. ADA enters distraught and indicates what she has seen. Her face is flushed and whipped by the wind. She is much more expressive than normal.

BAINES

I am giving the piano back to you. I've had enough.
The arrangement is making you a whore and me wretched.
I want you to care for me, but you can't.

BAINES sits down on a chair and prepares to eat, somewhat ignoring ADA. ADA is confused not quite believing the situation. She watches BAINES for some kind of confirmation.

HIRA

(softly) George, can I use this comb?

BAINES nods. ADA is still watching.

BAINES

It's yours, leave, go on go!

ADA is off balanced by the reversal of attitudes, surprised too, that she doesn't want to go. FLORA is fast to leave, ADA follows to organise and protect her piano on the journey.

68.

As she climbs out of the small valley surrounding BAINES' hut, she stops and looks back down at BAINES and his hut, in the EXACT same manner that she once looked at her piano from the cliff-top above the beach. BAINES is throwing the scraps of his meal to his dog, he does not look up.

69.

STEWART, on his way to BAINES, sees THE PIANO BEARERS and ADA way below him in the bush. He scrambles down a steep slope towards them.

STEWART

(still from some distance) Stop right there! This isn't yours .. what are you doing with the piano?

The women exchange looks.

FLORA

He's given it to us.

STEWART

(out of breath) Hah, you're very cunning Ada, but I've seen through you, I'm not going to lose the land this way. Wait here!

STEWART is off, pounding on down through the bush.

70.

HIRA is sitting on the front step of BAINES' place, blocking STEWART's easy access.

HIRA

George is sick, he doesn't want to see anyone.

Have you got tobacco?

STEWART goes around to a side window in BAINES' bedroom. BAINES is sitting on the bed, but lies back as he hears STEWART coming about the side of the house. STEWART opens up the window.

STEWART

I don't think you should have given up the piano. I will make sure you are properly taught, with music written on to sheets and ...

BAINES

I don't want to learn.

STEWART

You don't want to learn.

BAINES

No.

STEWART

And what does this do to our bargain? I cannot afford the piano if you mean me to pay.

BAINES

No, no payment. I have given it back. I don't want it.

STEWART

Well, I doubt I want it very much myself.

BAINES

It was more to your wife that I gave it.

STEWART

Well, thank you, she will appreciate it.

He closes the window.

(through the glass) So that is agreed on?

BAINES nods.

HIRA has wandered silently into BAINES' room. She sits on the edge of his bed.

HIRA

You made a big mistake George. You should have swapped the land for the wife in the first place. Now you got nothing to trade.

71.

In the distance a small procession of piano bearers pick their way through the huge ghostly stumps to STEWART's hut.

72.

At the door of the hut STEWART is distributing buttons to the piano bearers. One squats catching them as they fall. A commotion begins as one of the MAORIS snatches the whole jar and runs off. Two of them give chase, while the others insist on tobacco.

Inside the hut ADA had lifted the top of the piano and is peering in while playing notes to check tune and damage.

STEWART

Is it all right? Aren't you going to play something?

ADA pulls up a chair and seats herself at the piano. She rubs her hands and places them lightly on the keys, she turns from habit over her left shoulder where STEWART waits crossed armed. Quickly she removes her hands, stands and gestures FLORA to play. FLORA proudly takes up the seat, she pulls her lips in trying to control her happiness to play in front of both her mother and STEWART.

FLORA

What will I play?

She looks to ADA, who looks back through her not concentrating.

STEWART

Play a gig.

FLORA

(to ADA) Do I know any gigs?

STEWART

Play a song then ...

FLORA starts a song, ADA walks past them out of the hut, STEWART ignores her exit moving up to lean on the piano. ADA is seen through the hut window wandering amidst the ghostly, blackened trunks. STEWART's attention is drawn to ADA, he interrupts FLORA's singing with a sudden outburst.

STEWART

(exasperated) Why won't she play it? We have it back, and she just wanders off!

FLORA stops to watch her mother through the window. ADA looks towards the house as the music stops.

STEWART

Keep playing!

Grimly STEWART slaps the top of the piano to FLORA's playing.

ADA continues to walk, her face dark and puzzled. She stops. Her head stiffly, irresistibly, lifts and turns in the direction of BAINES' hut. She peers deep into the bush as if attempting to penetrate a puzzle. She blinks and walks on.

73.

The next day ADA and her piano face each other across the kitchen. A slit of light falls across the piano highlighting it's rosey walnut wood.

ADA's expression is critical and distant.

Taking a cloth she begins to clean and polish the piano. Her finger holds down one of the keys and we glimpse an old inscription on its side, a small heart, A arrow D. Putting the cloth aside she sits at the piano to begin playing. She starts with wholehearted feeling, her eyes closed, but before long she glances over her left shoulder and loses concentration. She stops and begins again. But once more a reflex has her glance across her left shoulder and she pauses in her playing. Disquieted she starts again and again she looks away. She stops, confused, unable to go on, unable to get up, one hand on the lid and one on the piano keys.

74.

ADA carrying her cape and bonnet hurries along the narrow bush path to BAINES' hut, FLORA has a fist of her skirt and is pulling back. ADA turns on FLORA and snatches the skirt out of the girl's hand. ADA signs to her and continues on.

FLORA

Why? Why can't I?

ADA signs again.

FLORA

(crossing her arms) I shan't practise and I DON'T C A R E!

But ADA does not wait to listen. FLORA walks back through the bush muttering childish expletives to herself. STEWART and his two MAORI helpers come out of the bush towards her. FLORA squeals with fright.

STEWART

(looking up the hill) Where's your mother? Where has she gone?

FLORA pauses petulant and grumpy.

FLORA

To HELL!

FLORA races off as fast as she can, enlivened by her wickedness. STEWART clambers back up the path. He just glimpses the distant figure of ADA nervously turning, her skirts flying as she hurries up the bush path. The wind bothers the tops of the trees, setting them groaning, rubbing their branches against each other.

75.

ADA enters BAINES' hut, she is breathless, announcing her presence by simply being there, standing there. BAINES comes through from the bedroom. Seeing ADA he is aloof, suspicious and his blinking becomes pronounced.

BAINES

So what brings you here? Did you leave something? I have not found anything.

ADA does not respond, finally she looks at BAINES and her look has a vulnerability and frankness that takes him off guard.

Does he know something?

ADA shakes her head.

The piano is all right? -- Would you like to sit? I am going to sit.

ADA does not sit. She stands immobilised. BAINES attempts to maintain his casual charade, he pours a tea.

He turns to her about to speak, but stops unmanned by a new fragility to her strength. He blinks rapidly.

BAINES

Ada, I am unhappy because I want you, because my mind has seized on you and thinks of nothing else. This is how I suffer, I am sick with longing. If you do not want me, if you have come with no feeling for me, then go!

BAINES walks roughly towards the door and opens it, his softness turned suddenly cruel.

Go! Go NOW! Leave!

ADA is stung by his change of tune, she takes a step towards him and eyes filling with tears of anger hits him hard across the face. BAINES' nose begins to bleed yet his face slowly lights up as if she has spoken words of love. ADA is flushed, shocked, the two face each other at this very moment profoundly aware of each other, profoundly equal. With each new breath, with every moment that their eyes remained locked together the promise of intimacy is confirmed and reconfirmed and detailed until like sleepwalkers who do not know how they came to wake where they did, they are standing next to each other and beginning to kiss each other, the lips, the cheeks, the nose. There is nothing practised about their tenderness, only their feelings and emotions guide their instincts. BAINES' face crumples with the exquisite pain of his pleasure, ADA cradles his head to her chest. BAINES struggles through her dress anxious to touch her skin.

76.

Outside STEWART surveys the hut suspiciously. BAINES' dog growls as he climbs on to the small verandah. Carefully STEWART peers through some loosely slatted boards. There are sounds inside which are worrying him. By standing on the seat he has found a spyhole where he can see ADA and BAINES kissing, undressing. He reels back angry, but just as we might expect him to burst through, he steps up to look again; the fatal second look, the look for curiosity. He watches BAINES bare-chested undressing ADA, her buttons burst, ADA laughs,

BAINES touches her under her skirts - anywhere, he takes himself under her dress pulling down her stockings. STEWART watches, stepping down to peer lower as BAINES buries into ADA's skirt. He does not seem to notice the dog licking his hand. Suddenly he pulls his hand away and looks at it, wet with dog saliva, he wipes it on the boards and continues watching as if mesmerised.

77.

Inside BAINES' small bedroom the raw dark boards contrast with the softness, whiteness of BAINES' and ADA's bodies. The long black strands of ADA's hair stick to her cheek and wrap around her neck. Her face is flushed and her eyes are bright. BAINES rolls his face across her chest, gently, slowly savouring the flavour of her body. Drunkenly they continue their sex, softly, slowly. ADA's breaths turn to low murmurs; these small sounds are extraordinarily moving to BAINES whose face swoons with joy.

BAINES

What? ..... what? ..... whisper ....!

78.

As ADA dresses, BAINES sits on his bed watching. He is unhappy thoughtful.

BAINES

Now you are going I am miserable, why is that? (He catches her hand and draws her to him) Ada I need to know, what will you do, will you come again?

ADA is distracted, collecting her buttons from the floor, concerned at the time past, worried to dress and return.

The camera cranes down and down to find STEWART wedged under the loose wooden floor slats. He cannot hear clearly, but ADA's hand reaching for each button is only inches away. One falls through a slat

on to STEWART's neck and on down his shirt collar. As she stands he rolls out.

BAINES

Ada I already miss you. What did it mean to you? Does this mean something to you?

BAINES takes ADA's arm to stop her, to find her attention.

Will you come again?

ADA nods, BAINES begins to dress.

Ada, do you love me?

ADA now dressed considers this question. Clearly she doesn't know, the question is more complex to her than to him. She moves to go, BAINES pulls her back.

ADA looks at BAINES puzzled and then as if by way of answer kisses him strongly and sexually. BAINES pulls away, not wanting this.

BAINES

(anxiously) Will you come tomorrow?

ADA continues to kiss him passionately, with the new born enthusiasm of someone who has just discovered their appetite for sex. Then as quickly as she began, she takes her hood and cape and goes to leave.

BAINES

Tomorrow?

She nods and is gone.

79.

FLORA and ADA are both in their white nightgowns. FLORA stands behind ADA on a chair trying to sort out the knots that have matted

at the back of ADA's head ADA shakes her head from side to side playfully, making the difficult job impossible.

FLORA

Stay still!

FLORA tries to hold her mother's head still, but ADA's high spirits are unstoppable and her hair flies out from side to side flicking FLORA in the face.

FLORA

Mama STOP IT!

FLORA starts to giggle and retaliates flinging her own hair from side to side. The two women are twirling in the small bedroom their hair flying about them, FLORA is shrieking with the fun, then stops dizzy and sick. ADA continues flicking FLORA as she twirls.

FLORA

Stop it I feel sick!

But ADA doesn't stop, her dark hair whirls about her, as giddy and disorientated, she knocks against the walls.

80.

Next door STEWART sits on his bed listening, his hair wet and neatly combed. He has a journal of pressed botanical specimens beside him. Hearing FLORA squealing he goes to the kitchen and standing back in the shadows, watches ADA frenetic, whirling through the part open door.

81.

(Music builds and plays throughout.) The next day, the sky is dark and the wind is ballooning ADA's cape, wrapping it up high around her. The tree tops are swaying furiously. Inside the bush it is dark and ADA hurries up through the path. She is out of breath and glancing

behind her as if to guard against followers, when directly in front of her STEWART steps out onto her path. ADA stops short. The look on his face is unlike any expression she has yet seen. His eyes do not look at her, but all about her in a way more animal than human. She lowers her eyes and calling his bluff walks steadily past him. But STEWART takes her arm and spinning her back, pulls her close and blind to all protest kisses her. ADA struggles furiously. His grip falters and she steps back staring at him, then runs off down the hill, but STEWART is on top of her clasping her skirts, pulling her towards him hand over hand, she slips and falls to the ground. STEWART is upon her, lifting her dress, touching her legs, ADA goes quite still, which throws STEWART long enough for her to scramble away, yet again STEWART catches her and again they roll on the ground, STEWART touching and kissing her, ADA turning herself this way and that to avoid it. There is a cat and mouse quality to their mute struggle finally broken by FLORA calling up the path, distraught and in tears, her angel wings have twisted about her waist.

FLORA
(TOP OF HER LUNGS) Mumma! Mumma!
They are playing your piano!

STEWART allows ADA to get up and the two women go back down the path towards home. The distant sound of the piano keys thumping.

82.

At the piano and with solemn dignity sits a MAORI WOMAN. She is wearing a top hat and a long black dress, beside her stands the MAORI who absconded with the buttons, most of which he has attached to his jacket. She plays loudly with two closed fists, her companion listens gravely, placidly, blinking at the crashes, two others listen from the doorway, one with his hands over his head.

83.

FLORA and ADA stand in the hut while fierce hammering can be heard outside. STEWART is boarding over the windows, barricading them in.

FLORA joins in the spirit of the exercise gaily pointing out any slats STEWART has missed.

FLORA

Here Papa!

ADA's face pales in the diminishing light. Exasperated by the threatened incarceration she shakes her head with anguish and moving to the piano lifts the lid and plays several bars brutally and strongly. She passes on to the bedroom, where she picks up the small hand mirror and looks at her face puckered with frustration. She touches her face and neck tenderly, then throws herself on the bed, face to the wall, her hands over her ears.

FLORA stands over her mother.

FLORA

You shouldn't have gone up there, should you? I don't like it and nor does Papa. Mama, (she pulls at ADA's hand) we can play cards together.

ADA rolls over, her eyes closed she pushes her face and body against the mattress. The movement is sensual and removed. FLORA watches puzzled.

84.

It is night and ADA is walking in the dark, ghostly in her white nightgown. She sits at her piano and begins to play loudly and strongly. Her hair is loose and she seems half-asleep. FLORA and STEWART wake to the loud playing and fumble their way to the kitchen. STEWART carries a lit candle. ADA continues her playing.

FLORA passes a hand in front of ADA's face.

FLORA

She is asleep, look.

One night she was found in her nightgown on the road to London Grandpa said her feet were cut and bleeding so badly she couldn't walk for a week.

85.

STEWART stands guard while ADA and FLORA wash their clothes in the stream. FLORA is taking the lead, soaping up the clothes, she passes the garments to her mother to rinse. ADA is distracted and as she takes the clothes, she just as soon lets them go and they float off down the stream past STEWART who tries to catch them but can't. Two MAORI BOYS continue the chase, enjoying the fun, thinking it a great adventure.

STEWART

What's happening? What are you doing?

ADA stares off into the distance rocking lightly back and forth as she crouches on a stone. Her dress unhitched floats down the stream behind her.

FLORA

Mama! Look out!

FLORA wades across to grasp yet another garment ADA has let drift off.

86.

On the way back to the barricaded hut FLORA swings between ADA and STEWART.

FLORA

One, two three ..... One, two, three .....

ADA glances around at the bush. FLORA beams enjoying a feeling of

familyness of which she is now the boss. The two women go ahead into the hut which STEWART shuts and secures with a beam.

87

It is night. ADA is tossing in the small bed beside FLORA, her hair wound across her face, she makes low moaning sounds as she pushes her face and body up against the sleeping FLORA. Her movement and moans increase until she wakes suddenly sitting bolt upright.

ADA walks through the kitchen, small slithers of moonlight lighting her path. She walks past the piano into STEWART's room who has gone to sleep with his candle still alight. ADA looks, then slowly her hand hovers above him before lightly touching his face. His eyes open, he looks towards ADA anxious and surprised, but as ADA continues, his reserve breaks and he is captive to his own sensations. She pulls down the sheet and strokes his neck, shoulders, chest, he reaches out towards her.

STEWART

Ada!

But ADA scowls and pulls away roughly, STEWART lies back anxious not to break the spell and when he is still, ADA continues to caress his chest. His eyes well with tears and he looks up into her face like a child after a bad dream, fearful and trusting. ADA continues like a nurse spreading ointment on a wound, tenderly and attentively she strokes down towards his belly. STEWART's skin goose bumps and he shudders. He puts his hand on hers to still it, she slides hers out and continues stroking. He looks at her pleadingly and childlike, she stops and kisses the soft skin of his belly, STEWART groans clutching the mattress. ADA seems removed from STEWART as if she has a separate curiosity of her own.

88.

Next day AUNT MORAG stands circling in STEWART's small darkened house. FLORA and ADA sit quietly together.

AUNT MORAG

Ohhh, it's so dark, it's like a dank cave.

NESSIE

Yes, like a cave.

AUNT MORAG

Ohh no, it makes my skin creep!

STEWART comes into the house with some logs, AUNT MORAG follows him across to the fire.

AUNT MORAG

Alisdair, is it because of our play? Have the natives aggressed you?

She continues following him to the door.

I have to say you have done the wrong thing here, you see you have put the latch on the outside. When you close the door, (and she closes it) it will be the Maoris that lock you in, you see? With the latch on that side you are quite trapped.

NESSIE

(nodding her head in imitation) ... you are quite trapped.

AUNT MORAG walks inside and continues to the table where her basket full of clothes and packets of food have been left. She lifts it from the table and begins to spread the cloth.

AUNT MORAG

We have just come from George Baines and they have taken him over. It is no wonder he is leaving, he has got in too deep with the

natives. They sit on his floor as proud as Kings, b · without a shred of manners.

NESSIE
(in unison) ... without a shred of manners

NESSIE and AUNT MORAG are unpacking parcels of cakes and biscuits, putting them on plates about the table.

AUNT MORAG
He is quite altered, as if they had been trying some native witchcraft on him. Well tomorrow or the day after he will be gone, and it is just as well.

ADA attempts to disguise her agitation, she moves to the piano and strokes it, she begins to play.

I am quite frightened of the way back, we must leave in good light. Will we be safe?

STEWART
(wanting them gone) If you leave soon, yes, I am sure of it.

STEWART and MORAG watch ADA at the piano. Her playing develops until she is fully absorbed. AUNT MORAG is intrigued despite herself.

89.

On the edge of the bush beside the dirt road to town AUNT MORAG attempts a discrete toilet stop. NESSIE keeps guard holding up the cape while one of their MAORI charges holds up another.

AUNT MORAG
You know I am thinking of the piano. She does not play the piano as we do Nessie.

The cape begins to droop as NESSIE listens.

UP! UP! No she is a strange creature and her playing is strange like a mood that passes into you. You cannot teach that Nessie, one may like to learn, but that could not be taught.

NESSIE again lets the cape droop.

Up! Your playing is plain and true and that is what I like. To have a sound creep inside you is not all pleasant ...

A fluttering sound in the bush.

... What is that?

NESSIE
(frightened) Ohhhhhh!

MAORI GIRL
(slow, relaxed) A pid-geon Auntie.

The party finish and hurry a little spooked on the road to town.

90.

It is night. ADA enters the room, STEWART looks at her shyly.

STEWART
I've been hoping you would come.

ADA strokes his brow. STEWART closes his eyes, breathing heavily relieved. ADA strokes the nape of his neck and on down his back. STEWART's face puckers, his eyes fill with tears. She strokes so softly, the tenderness is shocking to him. Gently she pulls his under-garment down, exposing his buttocks. STEWART grabs nervously

at them, hauling them up with his hands. ADA unclenches his fist and once more, slowly pulls then down. She begins to stroke his buttocks, STEWART is painfully eroticised, painfully vulnerable, he begins to weep, the intimacy and softness unmans him and he is helpless. STEWART sits up hunching over himself, retreating.

STEWART

I want to touch you. Why can't I touch you? Do you like me?

Slowly he raises his head to look at ADA. She looks back moved by his helplessness, but distanced as if it has nothing to do with her.

Do you?

ADA does not respond. STEWART slumps into disappointment and despair.

Why? Why not?!

91.

The next morning, ADA, FLORA and STEWART sit together in the small dark hut. FLORA preens a miniature landscape of moss and tiny branches all piled on a dinner plate. A slit of sunlight falling across the top small branches gives it a magical glow. FLORA's small dirty fingers push in another 'tree', she looks up happily.

FLORA

This is going to be Adam's tree and then I'm going to make a serpent with a very long tongue. (She pokes her tongue out and waggles it).

STEWART reads, he glances at ADA who is glum and lifeless.

92

ADA and FLORA wake to sunlight streaming in on their faces, more and more of it as STEWART rips the boards from the windows FLORA runs about in nightgown and boots happy to be in the sunlight. ADA winds her hair into a bun. STEWART walks inside, he packs food and fencing equipment.

STEWART

(Clears his throat) We must both get on. I have decided to trust you to stay here. You will not see Baines?

(ADA nods) Good, good. Perhaps with more trying you will come to like me?

93.

ADA hands out washing restlessly scanning the bushline. A tiny STEWART walks along the crest of the hill, eventually dropping out of sight.

94.

Inside the hut ADA is pacing, anguished and frustrated. Impulsively she picks up a knife from the kitchen table, opens the back of the piano and cuts one of the keys loose. Carefully she engraves on the side in Victorian handscript.

GEORGE, WHAT IS BEGUN IS UNENDED DO NOT LEAVE, ADA.

95.

Under the sheets FLORA has constructed a dolls' clothes line on which she hangs small strips of cloth. ADA hands her the key wrapped and tied in white cotton. ADA signs. Her black shadow behind the sheet recalls the Macabre play.

No!

The little girl continues defiantly with her miniature washing. ADA rips the washing line up and flings it aside. FLORA is shocked, stunned. She takes the key and walking off she turns and shouts.

FLORA
We're not supposed to visit him!

ADA signals "GO!".

96.
At the junction of the path to BAINES' hut is the beginning of STEWART's boundary fence. At this place FLORA has paused. She looks back to see if her mother is watching; she's not. FLORA turns sharply right so that she now follows alongside STEWART's boundary fence and away from BAINES' hut.

97.
The fence appears and disappears behind hills. FLORA too dips behind hills to reappear on the other side. She sings a brisk song to herself:

FLORA
"The grand old Duke of York. He had ten thousand men", etc.

98.
She pauses in one of the valleys, stilled by clumps of tall, mauve foxglove.

99.
The fence lines seems endless as the tired FLORA trudges up yet another hill, but from there, she can see where the fence finishes, half way up the crest of the next hill and at this point is STEWART, driving in a new fence post. He is watched by the BUTTON MAN and his

friend who squat passing a pipe between themselves. The BUTTON MAN strums tirelessly on his buttons.

FLORA

Mumma wanted me to give this to Mr. Baines.

She holds out the cotton covered piano key. STEWART looks up.

I thought maybe it was not a proper thing to do.

STEWART keeps working, hammering the post into the earth.

Shall I open it?

STEWART

No!!

He stops and takes the key, suspicious and uncomfortable. He slowly unwraps it and turning it over reads it. Squeezing the key in his fist, STEWART staggers off in a daze. He returns, picks up his open pack spilling the nails. Finally he drops the pack and the key, and leaves with only his axe. FLORA follows confused. The MAORIS waste no time investigating the booty. Clouds are gathering and darkening, rain begins to fall.

100.

STEWART strides fast towards the hut, his axe swinging in his hand. FLORA is far behind him, her angel-wings sodden.

101.

STEWART bursts into the hut, his wet hair is splattered against his forehead, his face is white. ADA looks up from her book, moving her hands from the table. STEWART swings his axe hard. It slices into the table, splitting a section off her book. ADA pushes her chair back.

STEWART
(exasperated) Why? WHY? I trusted you!

He pulls the axe out of the table and swings it at the piano.

WHY?

ADA runs forward to restrain him, but it sinks deep into the wood. The struck piano lets out a strange resonant moan.

I trusted you, do you hear? I trusted you. I could love you.

He takes her by the wrist.

Why do you do this? Why do you make me hurt you? Do you hear? Why have you done it?

STEWART shakes her violently.

You have made me angry. SPEAK!!

He pulls her out of the hut, past the now terrified FLORA.

You shall answer for this. Speak or not you shall answer for it!

He drags her out through the mud, towards the wood chop. It is raining hard.

ADA sees where they are headed and suddenly she is very scared. She bucks and struggles, but STEWART is infinitely stronger. At the wood chop she breaks free and crawls away through the woodchips and mud. But axe in hand he grasps her by the neck of her dress, then her hair, and pulls her backwards towards the cutting block. There, he takes her right hand and holds it in place with his boot, so that only ADA's index finger shows. ADA's head is held twisted between the wood chop and

STEWART's leg.

STEWART
(anguished) Do you love him? Do you?! Is it him you love?

ADA blinks rigid with fear. The rain is driving down. The axe falls. ADA's face buckles in pain.

FLORA
No, she says NOOOOOO!!!

Blood squirts onto FLORA's white pinafore, her angel wings are splattered in mud. STEWART wraps the finger in a white handkerchief and gives it to FLORA who backs away from him terrified.

STEWART
Take this to Baines. Tell him if he ever tries to see her again I'll take off another and another and another!

The figures seem tiny amidst the rain drenched skeleton forest.

102.

BAINES is saying his farewells up at the Maori Pa. Many people shake his hand European fashion while other voices echo the traditional Maori farewell.

Haere-Haere (Go, go)

HIRA holds his arm, she is sad and tearful. He places his hat on her head affectionately and slips her a much appreciated tin of tobacco.

HIRA
George, I will miss you, you are human like us. The Pakeha man, they have no heart, they think only of land.

A soft rain begins to fall. BAINES and HIRA make their way past the Meeting House and the low sleeping houses to the Pa entrance where his horse waits.

HIRA

I worry for us George. The Pakeha is cunning. Others, they say "No, the Pakeha is useful" they say, "How can the Pakeha get our land if we won't sell it?"

A crowd of children run beside them, dogs scurry off and pigs are kicked out of the way, their owners protesting loudly. Some hold mats over their heads to protect themselves from the rain, one has a battered umbrella.

HIRA

.... They are wrong George. Today we heard our enemy has sold his land for many guns, now we must protect ourselves and sell our land for guns.

BAINES mounts his heavily laden horse. The BUTTON MAN pushes forward to say his farewell, but is abruptly shoved aside, evidently unpopular with the others. BAINES glances over and sees the piano key the man has fashioned into an earring.

HIRA

I worry George what will happen. You can go home, but where will we go? We have nowhere to go!

HIRA's voice rises angrily as BAINES lets go of her arm and rides through the group towards the BUTTON MAN. He takes the piano key in his hand, the BUTTON MAN pulls back.

BUTTON MAN

(In Maori) It is mine. I found it.

BAINES turns it over and finds the writing on it.

BAINES

(urgently) I want this.

BUTTON MAN

(sulky) No, it belongs to me, I found it.

BAINES

What will you have? Ask for it? Tobacco?

HIRA

(still angry) A gun, ask for his gun.

The BUTTON MAN rubs his nails up and down his buttons while he considers what he will have.

103.

Outside the Pa walls near the kumera gardens, HIRA holds BAINES' saddle bags. It is raining hard as he rides out, hatless, shoeless and gunless, but clutching to his chest ADA's engraved key.

HIRA

George, Haere, haere.

BAINES

(In Maori) I'll be back.

104.

BAINES crosses through the pony paddock of the one room colonial school hall, school house. He has a piece of flax knotted around his waist to hold up his trousers. The sky is beginning to clear. In the paddock are five very shabby looking rides: one huge old wagon horse, built to carry a whole family, down to a tiny sour looking Shetland. BAINES listens at the school room wall, where lots of little voices

105

It's playtime and a whole bunch of straggly children rush out of the school room. The girls have long, stained, once white pinafores and everyone wears boots that seem too big, except the little boy who has the front cut off his boots so his toes can hang out.

Four little girls play a sedate game of skip rope, using a bush vine. The boys and some of the wilder girls play Bull-Rush. One little girl of about 7 goes off with a book to sit by a little stream. BAINES follows and sits beside her.

BAINES

Can you read?

The little girl immediately closes the book and walks off.

The girl keeps walking, before she turns about to watch him from a safe distance.

Another little girl drops down from a tree.

TREE GIRL

I can.

BAINES

You can read? (She is very small.)

TREE GIRL

Yes ... lots of things.

The skipping group of girls join them.

BIG SISTER

She can't read, she's my sister, I ought to

know.

Are those sweets?

TREE GIRL

I can read!

BAINES holds out the packet to the little girl.

BIG SISTER

Don't give her one.

BAINES does anyway.

BIG SISTER

She can't read.

The little girl throws the lolly paper away, which one of the other girls picks up and sniffs, she hands it to the others.

- Mmm caramels.

BAINES

Can you read?

He holds out the piano key. BIG SISTER takes it with great authority, her friends crowd behind her. She frowns at the writing. She turns it over.

BIG SISTER

(haltingly) George - what - is - be - gun - is - un- ended.

She looks up at BAINES gravely. BAINES sits on a log, leaning forward, his face furrowed with concentration. BIG SISTER runs a grubby finger along each word.

Do - not - leave - Ada.

The girls look up at BAINES. One of them wearing trousers under her dress falls to her knees in front of BIG SISTER.

TROUSER GIRL

No, No I won't leave ... I ... love you, oh Ada

The girls stand back to make way for the play.

BIG SISTER

Is this you? You have come back. It is too late!

TROUSER GIRL

No, not too late, I love you, let our hearts be together where they belong.

The two girls walk towards each other patting their hearts, their faces tragic and romantic. The little TREE GIRL insinuates herself onto BAINES' lap and helps herself to a caramel.

Just as the two heroines are about to kiss BIG SISTER falls over. Someone gasps. BAINES is enthralled.

BIG SISTER

It is too late ... ohhh George.

All the girls begin to chant:

- NO! KISS, KISS.

Some boys who have joined the group start an opposing chant:

- Die, die!

The girls forget their play to chase the boys off. The boys run ahead, whooping and chanting:

- Die, die!

BAINES picks up the key and runs his big finger along the writing. The little girl with the book reads it over his shoulder in a soft sweet voice.

BOOK GIRL
George, what is begun is unended.

106.
The figures of STEWART, his AUNT and NESSIE are tiny as they struggle to carry ADA through the white stumped marsh in the rain

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107.
NESSIE and AUNT MORAG are removing ADA's wet clothes, cutting through her sleeve with scissors.

AUNT MORAG
(distressed) Oh dear ... what an accident.
And she had wood enough ... If she doesn't
die of blood loss, we'll lose her to pneumonia.
HOT WATER! The mud is everywhere!

NESSIE
(sobbing) Oh the poor thing ... ohhh dear ...

STEWART brings the hot water into the bedroom. He is subdued, anxious, staring on hopelessly.

AUNT MORAG
(pushing him out) Now off you go, that glum
staring will cure no one.

STEWART leaves closing the door. AUNT MORAG continues to clean and attend ADA's wound while NESSIE tears sheets into bandage width strips. ADA is semi-conscious, her eyelids flutter and close, while her

lips move, as if to speak.

AUNT MORAG

Look at these lips ... what a story they try to tell!

NESSIE combs her hair out with great care and tenderness. ADA's body is shivering. NESSIE looks across at MORAG.

NESSIE

Might I put a blanket on? She is quite cooled down.

AUNT MORAG

Yes, very well, very well.

NESSIE pulls the cover over her. The two older women look at ADA, at her pale, anguished face grimacing with pain. NESSIE reaches out to stroke her black hair.

NESSIE

Ohh so soft.

AUNT MORAG

One of God's difficult daughters. Yet, one can feel <u>him</u> in her, frightening like a storm.

108.

BAINES rides up to his house in the evening light. He is silly with happiness. HIRA comes running out to meet him.

HIRA

George, oh George, the small girl, I saw her come up here, screaming, with blood on her, something very bad ... very bad ...

BAINES jumps off his horse and strides into his hut. Inside he finds

FLORA crouching in a corner, her face is white, tear stained and splattered with mud. Her angel wings are squashed behind her and blood stained. On seeing BAINES she cries with renewed pain and relief

BAINES

What has happened? Hush, hush, what is it?

FLORA thrusts the wrapped finger at BAINES. He takes the blood soaked object and unwraps it. The finger unravels into his hand, he reels back groaning, choking about to be sick.

FLORA

(yelling) He says you're not to see her or he'll chop her up!

BAINES

(angry, horrified) What happened?

But FLORA cannot speak. She bursts into loud sobs. BAINES kneels in front of her shaking her.

TELL ME! TELL ME!

FLORA screams in fear. BAINES stops shaking her and hugs her, rocking her.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, there, it'll be all right, I'll go and see ...

FLORA

No, he'll chop her up, he'll kill her!

109.

STEWART walks outside his hut disconsolate.

110

STEWART enters ADA's room with a lamp. He puts it down beside her on the table. He studies her pale face and dry lips. ADA's eyes flicker open.

STEWART
(speaking to his feet) I lost my temper. I'm sorry.

STEWART looks at ADA.

STEWART
You broke my trust, you pushed me hard, too hard. (he sighs) You cannot send love to HIM you cannot do it ... even to think on it makes me angry, very angry ...

ADA opens her eyes and looks at STEWART. It is evident she hears nothing and has understood nothing, she is struggling with pain. Her face grimaces and she groans.

STEWART
I meant to love you. I clipped your wing, that is all.

STEWART sings two lines of an English love ballad to ADA.

STEWART
We shall be together, you will see it will be better ...

Her forehead is damp with fever. She thrashes at the blankets. STEWART pulls them off to cool her. He feels her brow.

STEWART
(whispering) ... my love bird.

Her nightgown is damp with sweat and clings to her body. STEWART

reaches out to adjust her gown, his hand touches her leg and he holds it there, feeling a tingle of pleasure, that grows and builds the longer his hand remains

STEWART

Ohhhhh my love ...

His hand begins to move further and further up her leg, nudging the nightgown higher and higher. He looks at her face. She is closed-eyed, unconscious. STEWART's face crinkles into a pained expression and all his control melts into a drive to hold and extend this moment. He brings his mouth to her leg and begins to kiss her knee, her thigh. A new thought occurs to him, a terrible thought, but as he has phrased the thought to himself, he cannot resist it. He glances at her face still fevered and unconscious. Quietly, stealthily, he begins to undo his belt buckle. He bends across her to gently separate her legs. As he moves his body over her, he looks towards her and to his shame and horror she is looking directly back at him, her eyes perfectly on his, perfectly focused. Quietly STEWART moves back and pulls down her gown, all the time keeping his eyes on her.

STEWART

You are feeling better?

ADA's lips move slightly and STEWART turns suddenly as if he has heard something. Slowly he turns back to ADA.

STEWART looks at ADA intently, moving closer to her bed, closer to ADA his eyes locked on hers.

STEWART

What...?

The sound of his own voice makes him blink. He watches her as if listening to her speak in a voice that is so faint, and distant, that only with great concentration and perseverance can he make it out. As he watches her his face transforms; his eyes fill, his lips soften and his eyebrows take on the exact expression of her own.

The kerosene lamp burns fitfully, fluttering a light pulse across their faces. STEWART moves closer to ADA. Outside a wind bangs the iron roof and rubs branches against each other making a high-pitched see-saw sound. He leans closer still.

111.

STEWART carrying a candle in a glass box makes his way through ghostly tree stumps. In his other arm he has his gun.

112.

At BAINES' hut STEWART steps over the curled figure of HIRA sleeping on the verandah and walks through the hut towards the bedroom where a lit candle flickers.

In the bed lies FLORA wrapped in a blanket with BAINES beside her, axe in hand, both fast asleep. STEWART nudges BAINES awake with the butt of his rifle prodding him under the chin. BAINES wakes rudely with a start, frozen by the sight of STEWART and his rifle.

STEWART

Put that away, on the floor.

BAINES obeys, careful not to disturb the sleeping child. STEWART sits near the bed on a box, resting his gun across his knee, his face is glowing, he looks closely at BAINES, examining him.

STEWART

I look at you, at your face. I have had that face in my head hating it. But now I am here seeing it ... it's nothing, you blink, you have your mark, you look at me through your eyes, yes, you are even scared of me ...

STEWART laughs.

STEWART

Look at you!

BAINES watches him stiffly, disconcerted, unable to read STEWART's strange mood. STEWART stares back at him.

STEWART

(softly) Has Ada ever spoken to you?

BAINES

You mean in signs?

STEWART

No, words. You have never heard words?

BAINES

No, not words.

STEWART nods.

STEWART

Never thought you heard words?

BAINES shakes his head.

STEWART

(slowly) She has spoken to me. I heard her voice. There was no sound, but I heard it here (he presses his forehead with a palm of his hand). Her voice was there in my head. I watched her lips, they did not make the words, yet the harder I listened the clearer I heard her, as clear as I hear you, as clear as I hear my own voice.

BAINES

(trying to understand) Spoken words?

STEWART

No, but her words are in my head. (he looks at BAINES and pauses) I know what you think, that it's a trick, that I'm making it up. No, the words I heard, were her words.

BAINES

(suspiciously) What are they?

STEWART looks up at the ceiling as if reciting something he has learnt by heart and means to repeat exactly as he heard it.

STEWART

She said, "I have to go, let me go, let Baines take me away, let him try and save me. I am frightened of my will, of what it might do it is so strange and strong".

BAINES recovering himself eyes STEWART angrily.

BAINES

You punished her wrongly, it was me, my fault.

STEWART does not answer. Finally he looks up, his eyes full with tears.

STEWART

Understand me, I am here for her, for her ... I wonder that I don't wake, that I am not asleep to be here talking with you. I love her. But what is the use? She doesn't care for me. I wish her gone. I wish you gone. I want to wake and find it was a dream, that is what I want. I want to believe I am not this man. I want my self back; the one I know.

FLORA moves and turns in her sleep. The two men watch. Her brow frowns then smoothes. Her eyelids roll as her eyes dart back and forth in dream

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113

HIRA washes out the mud from FLORA's dress and angel wings in a bush stream.

114.

ADA is led from STEWART's hut by NESSIE. She wears a black dress and her arm is tied in a white sling. The light outside makes her blink. NESSIE smooths her hair behind her shoulders.

115.

The piano is carried on ahead, while in the secrecy of the bush BAINES kisses ADA passionately. She looks back at him worried.

116.

STEWART lays out 10 guns in front of his hut door. The MAORI NEGOTIATOR and his people inspect them. The MAORI NEGOTIATOR signals he wants the blankets too.

117.

On the beach ADA sits looking out to sea while FLORA plaits her hair in one thick braid behind her back. She places the bonnet carefully on top. At the sea edge in front of them the piano is being loaded on the canoe.

118.

HIRA and BAINES are next to each other by the canoe. HIRA is looking at ADA.

HIRA

I worry for you.

BAINES

No, I love her, we will be a family. I have her piano. I will mend it, she will get better. I worry for you.

HIRA

(grumpily) Oh, I am all right, I have my tobacco. In the end, can we lose? No, we can turn the pakeha gun on the pakeha and get our land back. Bang! Bang!

119.

The sea is choppy and the piano is difficult to steady in the canoe. BAINES helps with the rigging of the piano, thick rope ends coil under the women's feet.

MAORI MAN

The waves will come up and it will tip.

BAINES

We'll pull in if it's rough. Look, it's perfectly balanced.

HIRA

George, leave the piano, it is too heavy.

BAINES

No, she needs it, she must have it!

A SECOND MAORI MAN

(shrugging) The wind is already strong.

120.

The canoe has paddled away from the shore. BAINES sits next to ADA. He holds her good hand. ADA removes hers and signs to FLORA who looks at her mother then BAINES amazed.

BAINES

What did she say?

FLORA

(puzzled) She says, throw the piano overboard.

BAINES

(to ADA) It's quite safe, they are managing ...

ADA signs again.

BAINES

(anxiously) What?

FLORA

She says, throw it overboard. She doesn't want it. She says it's of no use.

BAINES

I have the key here, I'll have it mended ...

ADA mimes directly to BAINES, "PUSH IT OVER". Her determination is increasing.

MAORI MAN

She is right push it over.

BAINES

(softly, urgently) Please, you will regret it.

But ADA does not listen, she is adamant and begins to untie the ropes.

BAINES speaks to the MAORIS who stop paddling and together they loosen the ropes securing the piano to the canoe.

As they manoeuvre the piano to the edge ADA looks into the water She puts her hand into the sea and moves it back and forth.

The piano is carefully lowered and with a heave topples over. As the piano splashes into the sea, the loose ropes speed their way after it. ADA watches them snake past her feet and then out of a fatal curiosity, odd and undisciplined, she steps into a loop.

The rope tightens and grips her feet so that she is snatched into the sea, and pulled by the piano down through the cold water. Bubbles tumble from her mouth. Down she falls, on and on, her eyes are open, her clothes twisting about her. The MAORIS diving after her cannot reach her in these depths. ADA begins to struggle. She kicks at the rope, but it holds tight around her boot. She kicks hard again and then with her other foot, levers herself free from her shoe. The piano and her shoe continue their fall while ADA floats above, suspended in the deep water, then suddenly her body awakes and fights, struggling upwards to the surface.

As ADA breaks the surface her VOICE OVER begins:

ADA
(VOICE OVER)

What a death!
What a chance!
What a surprise!
My will has chosen life!?
Still it has had me spooked and many others besides!

ADA coughing and spluttering is pulled on to the canoe. She is wrapped in jackets and blankets. Underwater we see the canoe bottom, its oars dipping the surface.

I teach piano now in Nelson, AND I am grown
quite plump George has fashioned me a
metal finger tip, I am quite the town freak
which satisfies!

ADA's hands move across the piano keys, her metal finger shines in the dull light.

At night I think of my piano in its ocean
grave, and sometimes of myself floating above
it. Down there everything is so still and
silent that it lulls me to sleep. It is a weird
lullaby and so it is; it is mine.

ADA's piano on the sea bottom, its lid fallen away. Above floats ADA, her hair and arms stretched out in a gesture of surrender, her body slowly turning on the end of the rope. The seaweed's rust coloured fronds reach out to touch her.

ADA
(VOICE OVER)
THERE IS A SILENCE WHERE HATH BEEN
NO SOUND
THERE IS A SILENCE WHERE NO SOUND
MAY BE
IN THE COLD GRAVE, UNDER THE DEEP
DEEP SEA.
(Hood)